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Chairman:	Mr. Batagira	(Uganda)
later:	Mr. Carvalho (Vice-Chairman)	(Portugal)

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05-55322 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 67: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/60/170 and Corr.1, A/60/183 and A/60/...)

Ms. Akam Pan (United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said the children were the most vulnerable victims of armed conflict as more than 20 countries in the world were currently in the throes of violent conflict. They were killed or maimed, were orphaned, displaced or separated from their families, and their access to education and health care was compromised. They were used as child soldiers and exploited and abused. Girls faced additional risks of sexual violence and exploitation.

2. The General Assembly had repeatedly expressed its strong commitment to protecting war-affected children, in particular by establishing and renewing the mandate of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and had identified the issue as a pressing and crucial priority, especially according it in its 2005 Summit Outcome. Moreover, through collaborative efforts in the previous eight years among United Nations system bodies, Member States and civil society, significant advances had been achieved, including greater global awareness of the issue, more extensive field programmes and training of field personnel, and greater involvement by non-governmental and regional organizations as well as by children themselves.

3. Great scope for strengthening the implementation and consolidation of an extensive array of protection standards for children had increased, in particular the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had entered into force in 2002 and addressed recruitment and use of boys and girls by armed forces and armed groups, and the Security Council Resolutions on children and armed conflict adopted by the Security Council. That progress had been achieved because all the parties concerned had given due attention to the key principle of the best interest of the child, which it was important to continue to bear in mind in every aspect of the efforts to advance the agenda for children affected by armed conflict. Despite that progress, however, the situation for such children was unacceptably grave and unacceptable. A considerable gap existed between international standards and the situation on the ground. For that reason, the Special Representative had called on Member States to undertake the "era of application" campaign for the enforcement of those standards and had made it a priority of the Office's advocacy agenda. The campaign promoted four complementary components: (a) a monitoring and reporting mechanism; (b) monitoring of armed actors in compliance action plans; (c) the development of standards and methodology of local capacities and activities.

4. [illegible] The Special Representative had also briefed the Security Council on the monitoring mechanism, presented to the annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2005/72) for a resolution that provided comprehensive options to protect war-affected children, including a separate monitoring and reporting mechanism, initial immediate implementation for Security Council and country-requested listing as an addition to any Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.

5. Public advocacy and dissemination had an essential part to play in making international and local standards better known on the ground and in creating a critical mass of public denunciation, so that the abuse and victimization of children became socially unacceptable. Civil society groups and networks were of crucial importance in that effort, since without the involvement of community leaders and institutions on the front line, it could have no deep or sustainable impact. Much of the work had therefore to be done through them, while at the same time there was a need to promote indigenous cultural norms that had traditionally provided protection to children in times of war. Such norms should be seen as an important complement to international standards.

6. [illegible] Member States had a key role to play in ensuring the end of impunity, having primary responsibility for the protection and relief of children within their territories. It was for United Nations and other international partners to support and complement national [illegible] and efforts at reconciliation and implementation, with a view to preventing and improving the lives of children in situations of armed conflict. He emphasized in that connection that the role of the Special Representative consisted in articulating those and progressing initiatives, which were then implemented by the appropriate operational actors within and outside the United Nations system. Pursuant to a recommendation by the Security Council in his comprehensive assessment of

approach to poverty assessments was therefore of critical importance.

9. Material poverty meant malnutrition, which was implicated in about 40 per cent of the 11 million deaths of children under five in developing countries each year and, when resources were scarce, girls tended to suffer more from it than boys. Material poverty also meant being deprived of education, which again tended to affect girls more than boys. Such gender-specific deprivations had to be viewed holistically, since limited education meant restricted access to information and hence increasing susceptibility to disease and rights violations. That confining environment thus further exacerbated the cycle of poverty.

10. Armed conflict also exacerbated both the causes and consequences of poverty, and she therefore welcomed the Security Council's decision, referred to by the previous speaker, to establish a mechanism to report on and monitor abuses of children's rights. Additionally, poverty played a crucial role in the disproportionate spread of HIV/AIDS among the female population, as it forced young girls into prostitution and sexual trafficking.

11. Another form of poverty was deprivation of family care, both in its emotional effect and because families were the first line of defence in protecting children from abuse, violence and exploitation. Yet on account of material poverty, millions of children around the world lived without parental care. While, however, the family had primary responsibility for protecting children, Governments were ultimately responsible for supporting families and ensuring the well-being of children and should reduce poverty by improving opportunities for disadvantaged children and enabling adolescents to be active participants in society. She also called on them to support the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the development and adoption of international guidelines on children without parental care. In conclusion, she expressed the hope that in its resolution under the current item the Third Committee would reflect a definition of child poverty that highlighted its interrelated aspects.

12. **Mr. Mokhiber** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights), noting that 2005 marked the fifteenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, said that it was the most

widely ratified of human rights conventions and that the number of States parties to its two Optional Protocols had increased to three-digit figures. He noted that the Committee on the Rights of the Child would as from its next session be meeting in two parallel chambers, one to consider the many initial reports submitted under the two Optional Protocols, and the other to review periodic reports under the Convention.

13. In addition to considering the reports of States parties, the Committee had continued to work on specific thematic issues, in particular that of children without parental care, to which it had devoted its day of general discussion in September. Following that event, it had adopted a set of recommendations and recognized the need to give consideration to the preparation of further international standards or guidelines on the protection of children without parental care and in need of alternative care.

14. Committee members had also contributed to activities related to the Secretary-General's study on violence against children, an issue which had been highlighted in the Committee's review of the reports of States parties. The Committee was confident that the outcome of the study would provide States parties with tools to take action, in partnership with civil society, to protect every child against all forms of violence. The Committee was attentive to the follow-up given to its recommendations, initiating a series of workshops thereon, the third of which would be held in Buenos Aires in November 2005, while Costa Rica had shown interest in hosting a similar workshop in 2006. In view of the Secretary-General's proposals for the reform of the United Nations human rights system, and following a meeting with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Committee members had expressed their eagerness to collaborate with all stakeholders in enhancing the operation of the treaty body system for the benefit of rights holders.

15. **Mr. Nkingiye** (Burundi) said that the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/59/695-S/2002/72) covered events in Burundi only until December 2004 and he pointed out that there had been many positive developments in the country since then. Noting that armed rebel groups often failed to comply with the resolutions adopted to protect children, he asked what action could be taken to ensure that they did.

16. **Ms. Holguín** (Colombia) recalled that her Government persistently sought to prevent illegal armed groups from recruiting children and asked what joint action could be taken by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF to prevent such groups from doing so.

17. **Ms. Thandar** (Myanmar) said it was her understanding that the former Special Representative himself had acknowledged recent positive developments in Myanmar, including the recommendation by the country team in Myanmar that the Government's armed forces should not be listed in annex II of the Secretary-General's report. Those forces had nevertheless been listed, apparently as a result of tremendous pressure. Her Government was willing to cooperate with the Office of the Special Representative if the information provided by the Office was reliable, verified and credible. She therefore asked what action the Special Representative would undertake to ensure the reliability of the information and what should be done in similar cases where country teams recommended against an action or had not verified certain figures.

18. **Ms. Sham Poo** (Under-Secretary-General, Interim Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) reiterated that whatever action was taken must be in the best interests of the child. Responding to the comments from the representative of Burundi, she welcomed the positive developments in that country but noted that there were still a number of issues to be resolved. Since Burundi was one of the countries on the agenda of the Security Council, her Office would closely follow the Council's suggestions. The United Nations task force, under the leadership of the Special Representative, would work with the Government of Burundi and all relevant parties to obtain reliable data so that actions could be taken. Action plans with the parties recruiting child soldiers and committing other grave child rights violations would also ensure that such activities ceased.

19. In response to the representative of Colombia, she said that there were clearly a number of measures that could be taken to prevent children from being recruited by armed groups as well as other measures to help reintegrate them into society after demobilization. The operational work of UNICEF in that area was carried out in close cooperation with her Office.

20. Responding to the comments made by the representative of Myanmar, she said that since Myanmar was not on the agenda of the Security Council, the first phase of the monitoring and reporting mechanism would not apply to it. However, that did not mean that the international community should not continue its work to stop the recruitment of child soldiers and protect the rights of children in Myanmar. She acknowledged the commitment of the Government of Myanmar to do everything possible in that regard.

21. **Ms. Salah** (Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund) said that the objective of all UNICEF programmes in Colombia and elsewhere was to realize the rights of the child. To that end, UNICEF sought to build a protective environment for children by reinforcing the family, since isolated and poor families often saw the army as the only solution to feed and clothe their children. States also had an important role to play in reinforcing the family and the community. UNICEF was a credible force working with Governments and non-State parties, including rebel groups, to demobilize children and reintegrate them into society. Effective preventive measures taken by UNICEF included opening schools to children beyond school age.

22. **Mr. Thomson** (United Kingdom) requested further information about effective United Nations strategies for mainstreaming the issue of children in armed conflict. He also asked what specific action UNICEF was taking to protect children, including orphans, from HIV/AIDS discrimination, and what legal or other measures it recommended that Governments should take to tackle the stigmatization and ignorance of the disease.

23. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that his delegation appreciated the visit of the Executive Director of UNICEF to the Sudan and hoped for continued cooperation with UNICEF for the demobilization and disarmament of children involved in armed groups. He welcomed the efforts of UNICEF to fully integrate children into society through the provision of education and health care and encouraged the international community to support those efforts.

24. **Mr. Sebulime** (Uganda) said that the report of the Special Representative (A/60/335) read like a statement of political activism rather than advocacy. He asked whether future reports would continue in that vein and whether they would also continue to focus excessively on the views of non-governmental organizations with their own agendas, such as Human Rights Watch. The statement in the report that the Office of the Special Representative had "remained actively engaged" in situations where visits had not taken place required clarification and in such cases the Special Representative should take up longstanding invitations to visit in order to facilitate more accurate reporting. The report also placed greater emphasis on some regional organizations than others and a more even-handed approach should be adopted in future.

25. **Ms. Olivera** (Mexico) expressed her delegation's gratitude to UNICEF for its assistance to the areas of Mexico and Central America recently affected by Hurricane Stan. Her delegation appreciated the continued assistance provided by UNICEF, in coordination with other United Nations agencies, to deal with emergency situations that undoubtedly increased the risks to the well-being, the rights and the lives of children.

26. **Mr. Ouattara** (Burkina Faso) asked to what extent UNICEF could ensure that its assistance reached the poorest sections of society, particularly children in rural areas, and to what extent schooling could be provided from the earliest possible age.

27. **Ms. Sulimani** (Sierra Leone) pointed out that her Government used affirmative action to provide education for girls and that free primary education was currently available for girls in the northern and eastern regions of the country, where girls had traditionally been deprived of schooling for cultural reasons. She was grateful to UNICEF for its assistance in that area.

28. **Ms. García-Matos** (Venezuela) asked what programmes and activities UNICEF had envisaged for cooperation with States on the problem of street children.

29. **Ms. Sham Poo** (Under-Secretary-General, Interim Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict) said that the credit for the important work reflected in the report of the Special Representative belonged to Mr. Otunnu, and to his team and the other relevant actors from the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

30. In response to the representative of the United Kingdom, she said that mainstreaming was an important issue and, in that connection, drew attention to the comprehensive assessment report (A/59/331) in

which the Secretary-General had issued a number of recommendations on mainstreaming. The issue of children in armed conflict had already been mainstreamed within UNICEF and it was important to do the same throughout the rest of the United Nations. Indeed, all the heads of the United Nations departments and agencies had recently made a commitment to that end. The Special Representative would make special efforts to ensure an effective, consultative and collaborative approach with all other parts of the system. Furthermore, the Special Representative was the convener of an internal task force on children affected by armed conflict, within the framework of which meetings had been held with all the relevant parts of the United Nations. The Secretary-General had also focused in recent reports on the need for strong collaboration with non-governmental organizations and the Office of the Special Representative would continue such efforts both in the field and at Headquarters.

31. Responding to the representative of Uganda, she said that her end-of-assignment report strongly recommended that the next Special Representative should undertake some key visits, including to Uganda. She would have visited Uganda herself but for the fact that her appointment as Interim Special Representative had been for only two months. However, she had recently had fruitful discussions with the President of Uganda on the issue of children affected by armed conflict and she felt confident that the new Special Representative would visit Uganda as soon as possible.

32. The Office of the Special Representative, in accordance with its terms of reference, focused specifically on advocacy to promote and apply international standards and norms for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. The Special Representative's advocacy and outreach would underscore that the best interests of the child should be given primary consideration in all actions concerning war-affected children, ensuring that child protection, rehabilitation and development received the highest priority in policies, processes and programmes in conflict and post-conflict settings. One of the most important tasks of the Special Representative was to unblock political impasses so that child protection commitments could be secured from State and non-State actors at the national and regional levels. The Office of the Special Representative would continue to work with all the relevant regional organizations and not just a few of them.

33. **Ms. Salah** (Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund), referring to the questions from the representative of the United Kingdom, said that UNICEF was about to launch an important HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment campaign focusing on children and orphans. In order to eradicate HIV/AIDS discrimination, UNICEF was also working with many countries on legislative reform based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was not enough simply to adopt and ratify the Convention but also to implement it, thereby reinforcing its main principle of non-discrimination. UNICEF was working with schools to ensure that children infected with HIV/AIDS were accepted by them, and it also advocated free compulsory education so that children orphaned by HIV/AIDS were accepted by schools. With regard to the feminization of HIV/AIDS, UNICEF had specifically designed programmes to inform girls about the disease and how to avoid contracting it.

34. UNICEF would continue to assist Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso with education programmes for girls, especially in rural areas, and would assist Burkina Faso with the preschool programmes already begun there. UNICEF would also continue to work with the Sudan for the demobilization and disarmament of children involved in armed groups.

35. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert for the United Nations study on violence against children), introducing his report in document A/60/282, said that children still lagged far behind adults with respect to legal protection against assault and humiliation. However, he was encouraged that a large number of Governments, non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society had responded to his questionnaire and that the study process had placed violence against children firmly on the international agenda.

36. The nine regional consultations facilitated by UNICEF with the support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the World Health Organization, had provided an opportunity to focus attention on violence against children and to strengthen partnerships and networks. Even more important, the consultations had generated the political will needed to ensure that the issue would be addressed, indeed,

follow-up activities in various parts of the world were already being implemented.

37. His country visits had enabled him to identify particular forms of violence against children and observe practical measures to prevent and respond to such violence. The concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the work of the special rapporteurs and of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had also been taken into account.

38. While he was encouraged by the growing awareness of the need to address violence against children, he remained struck by the prevalence of the problem, which knew no boundaries of geography, class, politics, race or culture. With the rapid development of modern communications technology, virtual space had become another area where children could be exploited or victimized.

39. Violence should never be used as a means of discipline or excused as a social norm. The objective of the study should be to ensure that children enjoyed the same protection as adults and to challenge social norms which ratified violent practices under the guise of tradition. Honour killings, female genital mutilation and homophobia could not be condoned under any circumstance.

40. One of the most serious issues confronting modern society was the vulnerability of children in conflict with the law. Children faced a high risk of violence at almost every stage of their contact with the juvenile justice system, yet, the overwhelming majority of them did not belong there. Security and judicial systems needed to become more accountable, particularly to marginalized populations. It was critical to ensure that children did not come into conflict with the law by developing imaginative ways to divert them.

41. Although States were primarily responsible for preventing and responding to all forms of violence against children, the family played a unique role and must be respected, supported and strengthened. Non-violent, positive forms of discipline needed to be promoted so that the family's role in protecting children from all forms of violence could be reinforced.

42. Real change could not be achieved unless Member States developed comprehensive, coordinated public policies respecting the obligations enshrined in the human rights treaties on violence against children. Routine violence against children must be recognized for what it was: a serious threat to national development and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The involvement of all sectors — Governments, the international community, civil society, children and adolescents — was required if the study which he was finalizing was to have a broad impact.

43. **Mr. Abbas** (Iraq) wished to know whether the report on violence against children contained any specific plan regarding children in Iraq. He also would like to have further information on UNICEF plans to assist Iraqi children.

44. **Mr. González** (El Salvador) drew attention to the fact that juvenile street gangs were gaining ground in Central America, Mexico and the United States and wished to know if the problem would be addressed in the report.

45. **Ms. Khalil** (Egypt) said that her delegation was pleased that the study focused on cooperation, while bearing in mind the particularities of each culture. It wished to know whether there was any link between the study on violence against children and the study on violence against women.

46. **Mr. Meyer** (Brazil) recalled that an earlier report by the World Health Organization had highlighted the problem of violence against children and older people in the home and wondered whether the study addressed that particular issue.

47. **Mr. Diallo** (Mali) said that his Government had taken note of the concerns expressed in paragraph 32 of the report and that they would be dealt with appropriately. With regard to female genital mutilation, he wished to point out that, although the practice was punishable by law, the majority of Mali women were unaware of their rights. He therefore called upon the international community to help raise awareness of the problem.

48. **Mr. Pinheiro** (Independent Expert for the United Nations study on violence against children), in reply to the representative of Iraq, said that the study devoted considerable attention to the consequences of armed conflict, especially with regard to refugees, displaced persons and children. Regarding children's gangs in Central America, he said it was important that Governments should focus on prevention as well as

punishment. The report would include a discussion of the problem and would highlight the fact that Governments in the region were serious about tackling children's gangs. Concerning the question from the representative of Egypt, he said that the experts worked together as they prepared their reports on violence and that a connection did exist between the study on violence against women and the study on violence against children.

49. As to corporal punishment, the emphasis should be placed on teaching parents alternative forms of discipline rather than prosecuting them. In keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it was important to establish a dialogue between parents, teachers and children and to work closely with the different visions that some countries had concerning corporal punishment. Regarding the comment by the representative of Mali, it was generally agreed that criminalizing female genital mutilation was not the solution. Several African countries had succeeded in eliminating the problem by concentrating on raising awareness at the community level.

50. **Ms. Salah** (Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund), referring to the question by the representative of Iraq on UNICEF plans to assist children in that country, pointed out that she had met with Iraqi government representatives and non-governmental organizations in Cairo. The participants had discussed ways to end violence against children in Iraq, which included working with families and society as a whole to protect children. Further meetings would be held to discuss ways to reconstruct the country's educational sector.

51. She agreed with the Independent Expert that awareness-raising was the key to ending female genital mutilation and pointed out that 1,300 villages in Senegal had managed to put a stop to the practice by working at the community level. UNICEF had organized a meeting on female genital mutilation in Dakar in December 2005 that would bring together many African government representatives as well as parliamentarians.

52. *Mr. Carvalho (Portugal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

53. **Mr. Wood** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and, in addition, Liechtenstein and the Republic of Moldova, said that the 2005 World Summit had brought home the unpalatable truth of just how far the international community still had to go to meet the commitments set out in the final document of the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly, entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex). The Convention on the Rights of the Child must constitute the primary standard in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The European Union called on UNICEF to continue to promote the rights of children in its programmes.

54. The European Union remained critically concerned about the situation of children affected by armed conflict, both as combatants and victims. It strongly condemned the recruitment of child soldiers by armed groups and Governments and, where such recruitment had taken place, called upon Governments and armed groups to demobilize, disarm and reintegrate children into their communities. The European Union encouraged the parties concerned to develop and implement the action plans called for in Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) without further delay and to take all practicable measures to protect children outside direct conflict zones, including refugees, who were orphaned, displaced, unaccompanied or otherwise made vulnerable to abuse as a result of conflict.

55. The situation of girls deserved particular attention. The European Union Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict provided a useful framework for activity in that area. The European Union continued to support a range of programmes in countries affected by armed conflict, including demobilization, rehabilitation and anti-trafficking initiatives, and to raise its concerns, both in its regular political dialogue and in specific contacts undertaken to implement the Guidelines, with the Governments of countries affected by conflict.

56. The European Union supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to implement the monitoring and reporting mechanism called for in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). It urged all Member States that had not already done so to sign, ratify and fully implement the relevant international instruments aimed at the protection of children affected by armed conflict, particularly the second Optional Protocol to the

Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The European Union reaffirmed its support for the Court in the fight against impunity, including in the case of crimes committed against children in situations of armed conflict.

57. The European Union remained concerned about the impact of the AIDS epidemic on children. It stressed the importance of effective national frameworks in response to HIV and AIDS to ensure coordinated, transparent, participatory and accountable approaches. It was also concerned about the welfare and rights of children whose parents had HIV, AIDS orphans and children at risk, particularly sexually exploited children and those made more vulnerable by armed conflict, and had welcomed the special focus on children orphaned or separated from their parents by HIV or AIDS during the day of general discussion of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in September 2005.

58. Prevention must be at the heart of any comprehensive policy to address HIV and AIDS, and the key to prevention was education. The European Union supported the call for universal access to comprehensive information related to AIDS prevention, as contained in the policy position paper on intensifying HIV prevention of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) adopted in June 2005.

59. Throughout the world, children continued needlessly to contract HIV at birth because insufficient support was given to expectant mothers to prevent mother-to-child transmission. Such support should include not only the provision of essential drugs and care for mothers-to-be, but also voluntary counselling and testing for pregnant women and their partners. Women needed access to reproductive health services, as agreed in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, in order to be able to make informed choices about pregnancy and childbearing. Bearing in mind that some girls were married as young as 11 or 12 years old, the international community must recognize the rights of young people concerning their own sexual and reproductive health in order to prevent HIV infection and early pregnancy.

60. The European Union was committed to the universal provision of quality treatment and care and endorsed the call for full and equal access to treatment contained in the outcome of the Group of Eight summit. It called on the pharmaceutical industry and all other stakeholders to ensure the development of medication that was suitable for children of all ages by 2010.

61. Children suffered more than most from stigma based on HIV status — actual or presumed — of the child or parent. Similarly, gender-based discrimination in inheritance law often put children orphaned by AIDS at an even greater disadvantage. The European Union urged all countries to address inequalities in the law and to sign and implement the UNICEF-sponsored *Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS*.

62. The European Union was committed to playing its part to ensure the successful replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and was determined to work with the United Nations system and other partners to implement the recommendations of the Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors. It reaffirmed its commitment to the outcomes of the International Conference on Population and Development, the special sessions of the General Assembly on Children and on HIV/AIDS, and the 2005 High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS. It welcomed the decision of UNICEF to include assistance to children affected by HIV and AIDS as one of its strategic priorities in its latest five-year plan and looked forward to working with them to implement it.

63. **Mr. Koonjul** (Mauritius), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the outcome document of the United Nations special session on children in 2002 (resolution S-27/2) strongly reinforced the Millennium Development Goals and the Millennium Declaration. SADC had noted the progress made in the follow-up to the special session on children, as contained in the Secretary-General's report A/60/207, and stressed that much remained to be done.

64. SADC attached great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, including its continued support to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child. SADC Heads

of State and Government had therefore launched the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan in 2004, which emphasized that children's rights should be mainstreamed in all development endeavours.

65. Millions of children, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, remained vulnerable to chronic ill health and disease and continued to be affected by conflicts. The participants in the 2005 World Summit had recognized that malaria could be eradicated easily if the international community garnered the necessary political will. Although the use of insecticide-treated bed-nets and indoor residual house sprays had proved to be largely effective in the control of malaria, the practice was still not sufficiently widespread. The international community should therefore assist in addressing that issue in a concerted manner. In addition, as routine immunization significantly contributed to the reduction of infant and under-five mortality, his delegation looked forward to the launch of the Global Immunization Vision and Strategy for 2006-2015. HIV/AIDS had a particularly devastating impact on the education sector. Recent studies had found that access to education for children, particularly girls, dramatically lowered their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection.

66. SADC member States regarded gender equality and the empowerment of women as being at the core of all the Millennium Development Goals. The girl child deserved special attention. Furthermore, unless men and boys and girls themselves were made more aware of their responsibilities concerning gender equality, the international community would never be able to fully address some of the persistent problems affecting girl children. SADC had endeavoured to keep the focus on the situation of the girl child by, among other things, submitting a biennial resolution in the Committee. It urged all Member States to continue their support by sponsoring the resolution at the current session.

67. SADC strongly condemned violence against women and children in all its forms and was committed to the prevention and eradication of violence against children in accordance with the SADC 1998 addendum to its 1997 Declaration on Gender and Development. Although protecting children from violence was a matter of grave concern to SADC, providing that protection was very complex owing to insufficient capacity. SADC shared the concerns that were raised in the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/60/335), including the concern that data availability in the area of child protection remained weak. Nevertheless, it was encouraging that the protection of war-affected children had been firmly placed on the international peace and security agenda and that the Security Council had adopted resolution 1612 (2005), calling for reliable information on grave violations against children in armed conflict and for the systematic prohibition of recruitment of child soldiers and abuse of girl children as wives and sex slaves.

68. **Mr. Chia** (Singapore) said that his Government was guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the 21 specific goals and targets for child health, education and protection adopted by the United Nations special session on children held in 2002. At the national level, the rights of the child were monitored by an interministerial committee and enshrined in a national statement on the best interests of the child. Four pillars underpinned the policies of child development in Singapore: good laws; a strong family network; a comprehensive family network; and a strong education system.

69. His Government continued to strive towards maximizing educational opportunity for children. All children must attend at least six years of primary school. Measures to encourage greater recognition of student achievements and talents in non-academic areas had been put in place. Also, given that some children and young persons required special care and attention, efforts had been made to coordinate the work of various agencies to support children and youth who left school prematurely and to provide life skills and work skills training.

70. Singapore had ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour. Employment legislation had been amended to raise the general minimum working age for young persons from 14 to 15 and the minimum age for light work from 12 to 13. Singapore therefore intended to ratify ILO Convention No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment before the end of 2005.

71. **Ms. Tian** Ni (China) said that in many regions of the world tens of thousands of children continued to die each year from armed conflict and disease, to be subject to child labour and unable to attend school, or to suffer from malnutrition, abject poverty, sexual

abuse and exploitation. The international community must strengthen cooperation and take effective measures to eliminate the root causes of the above-mentioned problems. The developed countries in particular must provide financial resources and technologies to the developing countries so as to create a sound environment for the healthy development of all children.

72. Children in China accounted for one fifth of the world's total. Respect for the elderly and caring for the young had been a long-standing tradition in China. Her Government, which had always attached importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, the ILO Convention on the worst forms of child labour, and the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption. It was currently giving positive consideration to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on children in armed conflict.

73. The Government had put in place a series of legislative and administrative measures aimed at protecting the rights of children in keeping with the foregoing conventions and protocols. It had also established a comprehensive nationwide organizational structure to address women's and children's issues involving the relevant State agencies and had outlined a plan for the development of children in China for 2001-2010 which focused on health, education, legal protection and the environment.

74. Her Government had submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child its second report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as its first report on the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. It attached great importance to dialogue with the Committee and would continue to study its conclusions and recommendations and cooperate closely with it.

75. **Mr. Afifi** (Egypt) hoped that the General Assembly would continue to support efforts to promote children's rights and encourage cooperation between Governments, civil society and international institutions to mobilize the necessary resources to ensure the protection of children, who constituted about one third of the population of the world, and to enable them to enjoy their full human rights.

76. In that connection, he referred to the plight of Palestinian children living under occupation who were thereby prevented from exercising their fundamental human rights, the most elementary right being the right to live in freedom. The international community had a role to play in helping Palestinian children to live in families that were not in constant fear of losing their homes, livelihood or freedom.

77. Egypt was a leading country in terms of the rights of children, both nationally and internationally. At the international level, the most important safeguards included instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. His country had been in the forefront of the States that had signed and ratified those instruments. Egypt had also taken a lead in efforts to set up strategies to protect children from all forms of violence and had hosted the regional consultation on violence against children at the end of June 2005 which had made recommendations on the Secretary-General's study of the subject.

78. At the national level, Egypt had enacted laws which accorded due importance to children, chief among them being the Children's Act which had been passed in 1997. It had also established the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in 2000, which played an essential role in protecting the rights and welfare of children, and it had set up numerous other important projects focusing on disadvantaged groups such as street children and children with special needs, combating child employment and female circumcision. The previous year had also seen the establishment of the Egyptian Council for Human Rights, a national body for safeguarding the rights of all Egyptians, particularly those of children.

79. Egypt had implemented a number of policies and programmes on the provision of basic services to Egyptian children, particularly in education and health, and as a result had seen an improvement in basic social indicators. In the field of health, the mortality rate for children under 1 year old had fallen during the previous four decades from 182 to 30 per 1,000 live births, and polio had been eradicated at the beginning of the present century. Egypt had also been successful

in curbing the phenomenon of female circumcision under its strategy for eradicating the practice in over 120 Egyptian villages. In the field of education, the dropout rate and illiteracy among children had been reduced by 45 per cent over the previous decade, the enrolment of girls in primary education had increased by 79 per cent and the proportion of children completing basic education had risen to 98 per cent.

80. Despite what had been achieved in promoting the concept of children's rights, his delegation agreed with what the Interim Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had said in both her statement and the report (A/60/335) to the effect that greater emphasis should be placed on the rights of children in situations of armed conflict. In that context, his delegation had been expecting the report to address the situation of children living under occupation, especially in the occupied Arab territories.

81. All internationally recognized data and indicators relating to the continent of Africa pointed to a steady decline in the economic and social situation of African children. For example, the incidence of AIDS and of other serious diseases, such as hepatitis and malaria, among children was increasing. Moreover, more than 40 million children of primary school age were illiterate because they were forced to bear arms or because of hunger, poverty and the lack of schools. That situation demonstrated the need to seek new machinery for international cooperation to protect the rights of African children, to develop their potential and to achieve the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It also indicated the importance of establishing a real partnership in order to meet the basic needs of children and to ensure that the rising generation was able to play its part in preserving worldwide security and stability.

82. **Ms. Faye** (Senegal) said that the various forms of violence against children, the lack of access to education and health care and the other violations of the rights of the child in developing countries, and in Africa in particular, were a matter of concern to her delegation. Girls, who were especially affected by exploitation, were sometimes abused as domestic servants or reduced to working as prostitutes. Rural children often suffered from non-enrolment in schools, and illiteracy among girls was widespread. Furthermore, children in Africa were exposed to the perils of street life and human trafficking and implicated in armed conflict.

83. Meeting the needs of children and protecting their rights was above all a national responsibility. Therefore, her Government had worked with NGOs and local officials, through a coordinating committee under the Senegalese presidency, to support the establishment of a system for monitoring the protection of the rights of the child. Such issues as female circumcision, begging, exploitation and sexual abuse were part of the poverty reduction strategy paper and were regularly discussed as part of the national agenda by the stakeholders.

84. The specific actions undertaken by her Government to protect the rights of the child included a nationwide polio vaccination campaign, the establishment of child-care centres for children aged 2-4, the extension of scholarships and the promotion of school enrolment for girls, an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign and a number of other measures to improve the quality of life of children. In conclusion, she commended the support provided by UNICEF to her Government to implement its child-welfare policies and called on the Fund and African Governments to cooperate more closely to ensure peace and prosperity for the children of Africa.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.